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STATE PASS USTR FOR USTR AGAMA  
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ  
STATE PASS OPIC FOR ZHAN AND MSTUCKART  
STATE PASS TDA FOR LFITT, PMARIN  
STATE PASS EXIM FOR JRICHTER

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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: BAKASSI REFUGEE SITUATION IMPROVED

Classified By: Consul General Donna Blair for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

11. (SBU) Acting Consul General spoke July 7 with Nzam Ogbe, Chief of Staff to the Governor of Cross Rivers State. Ogbe said that the refugee situation had stabilized and that the situation was under control. The Governor had visited Ikang, where the refugees are sheltering in a primary school, and will go again in the near future, he said. Ogbe added there had been some issue as to who was actually a refugee, he said, but now sufficient blankets and food are available for those in the camp he said. "All the parties have come together; there are no longer any major issues," he concluded.

12. (C) Dr. Theo Osin Oyuko (protect throughout), Executive Director of the Cross River State Youth Assembly, told Acting Consul General on July 7 that most of the refugees had already left the camp. Those who left were riverine people who earn their living from fishing. They had few household goods or clothing when they lived in the Bakassi area, so they were able to move quickly out of the Ikang camp and into other riverine areas of the Niger Delta, he said. Oyuko estimated that there are now fewer than 1,000 refugees living in the primary school compound in Ikang. The conditions for those who remain is much improved, with sufficient food and blankets now provided by the Federal and State governments as well as the interventions of Cross River Senator Florence Ita-Giwa, he said. The government plans to resettle the refugees and is discouraging them from attempting to return to the Bakassi Peninsula. The youths who had been detained by the Cameroonian gendarmes in Achimemotor, formerly called Achibong, in northern Bakassi have been allowed to rejoin their families in the camp in Ikang, Oyuko said. The Government of Nigeria intervened and "sorted the matter out", he said.

13. (C) Currently, tensions in and around the peninsula have eased, Oyuko said. However, Oyuko believes that there will still be problems in August when the handover of the peninsula to Cameroon is finalized. Oyuko estimated that there are up to 100 youths who call themselves the Bakassi Freedom Fighters. They have allied themselves with the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and

with the Joint Revolutionary Council (JRC). They plan to resist the final handover using arms, Oyuko said. Their method is to attack and then to draw back into the creeks.

14. (SBU) Acting Consul General also spoke with Senator Florence Ita-Giwa on July 7. The Senator said she would return to Ikang on Thursday, July 10, to see for herself the current state of affairs, but had no current information.

BLAIR